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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2009

IN TODAY'S PAPERS

Opposition Parties CHP and MHP Decline to Support the AKP's Constitutional Reforms
Mainstream Vatan reports opposition MHP leader Devlet Bahceli told his party group meeting yesterday that the MHP would give no support to the ruling AKP's plans for constitutional changes. Mainstream Sabah reports that President Gul and opposition CHP leader Baykal met at the Presidential Palace yesterday to discuss constitutional reform, along with Turkish ties to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Sabah says Baykal told Gul the constitutional amendments "are not a priority on Turkey's agenda at the moment" and thus "we don't support the amendments."

Karayilan: The PKK No Longer Pursues Separatist Goals
Mainstream Milliyet columnist Hasan Cemal continued his interview with Murat Karayilan, the top leader of the PKK. Karayilan said, "The PKK is in a more reasonable position when compared to past. The PKK is not a separatist organization anymore but is looking for a solution that respects the unitary structure of the country. Our aim is to have Kurds live under equal rights and freedoms. The Regional Administration Law can be amended in order to reinforce local administrations. Then the 'social reconciliation project', which is also called 'amnesty' by some groups, may come to the agenda in order to address issues like Kurdish identity and cultural rights. But for such a process to start, a cease-fire is a must."

FM Travels to northern Cyprus
Islamist-oriented Zaman reports Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu was sworn in before the parliament yesterday and will now go to northern Cyprus on what is considered his 'first formal foreign visit.' Davutoglu's visit comes one day after a new government was established in northern Cyprus. Zaman says Turkish Foreign Ministers traditionally go to northern Cyprus for their first foreign visits, and during the visit Davutoglu will reiterate

Editorial Comments on Turkish Foreign Policy

Sami Kohen wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "It comes no surprise that Davutoglu began his tenure as foreign minister by meeting with his

Azeri counterpart as soon as he took in charge. Turkey has an opportunity to advocate for normalization between Baku and Yerevan while Turkey itself works on rapprochement with Armenia. Turkish diplomacy seems to be more focused on the Caucasus in the days to come, which is the right priority."

Cengiz Candar wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Foreign Minister Davutoglu comes from the perspective of producing policy and being proactive. He has pursued a 'zero problem with neighbors' policy and a 'soft power role' in the Middle East policy from the beginning. Today we can see the positive results of his approach. Turkey has become an increasingly powerful country in the international arena."

The World Shocked About The Violent Attack in Mardin
All papers and TV channels: Media outlets are almost completely focused on reporting on the mass murder of 44 people in Bilge village of the southeastern province of Mardin, which occurred earlier in the week. Conservative-nationalist Turkiye reports all of 8 suspects who were detained carry the same surname those who were killed. According to Turkiye, a resident of the village said, "The assailants wanted the bride to marry one of their relatives. However, they raided the wedding ceremony when they heard that the bride was marrying a member of another clan, with whom they were in blood feud." Mainstream Vatan claims that the massacre was carried out because the bride's father had decided that his daughter would marry the son of her aunt, not the son of her uncle. Liberal Radikal says that the massacre might be related to dispute about the control of a fishery. Turkish officials condemned the attack. PM Erdogan said "no tradition, no custom can ever justify this

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massacre." President Gul, CHP leader Baykal and MHP leader Bahceli also condemned the attack by describing it as a "major tragedy" and called for the murderers to be tried without any delay. Leftist Taraf reports that DTP Deputy Chair Emine Ayna criticized the village guard system in this region by saying "the slaying in Mardin reveals the hazards of the village guard system. The massacre is result of state policy encouraging the murder of Kurds by Kurds." Ayna demanded the abolishment of the village guard system. The paper adds that the village guard system was introduced in 1985. The guards are paid by the state and they are given weapons and ammunitions by the military. And all the men in Bilge village were village guards.

Meanwhile, EU Commissioner Olli Rehn said he was shocked and sorrowed by the attack. Nationalist Tercuman says that the world was horrified by the massacre carried out in modern Turkey, a country that is pursuing EU accession.

Mardin Massacre

Yasemin Congar wrote in leftist Taraf: "This brutality cannot merely be explained away by 'revenge' or 'tradition.' This massacre is a result of a 25-year war that undermines regional values with the help of state weapons. Most of the victims as well as the assassins are village guards and the weapons used in the massacre were actually provided to them by the state. It is not possible to understand this massacre without looking at the bigger picture, which shows that the village guard system operates above the law and at the same time is sponsored by the state."

Mehmet Kamis wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "This unspeakable act cannot simply be explained by animosity, terror or ignorance. This tragedy is rooted in social trauma, where violence haunts everybody. Bloodshed and death have become ordinary things in the southeast. First of all we should start thinking about repairing souls in order to overcome the trauma in this region."

Gungor Mengi wrote in mainstream Vatan: "Ignorance is a dangerous thing and as we have seen in the Mardin massacre, it can even turn humans into something worse than monsters. It is urgent that we focus on education by working with universities and non-governmental organizations."

A Coup is Thwarted in Georgia Prior to NATO Exercises

Media outlets are united in expressing alarm over an attempted coup in Georgia, which borders Turkey to the northwest. Mainstream Haberturk's website reports, "NATO exercises stir up the Caucasus." Leftist nationalist Cumhuriyet reports in "Coups Tensions Between Moscow and Tbilisi," that "Things are heating up in the Caucasus again." In "A Coup Attempt in Georgia," leftist Taraf notes, "Georgia claims Russia was behind the coup," but "Russia has denied the allegations." Mainstream Sabah reports, "Things are not calming down in Georgia." Far right Ortadogu reports "The tensions won't ease in Georgia." Mainstream Hurriyet reports "The waters are not calming for our neighbor, Georgia," as "this time a former politician and retired generals who support Moscow attempted to overthrow the government." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports in "A Coup Is Stopped by Cameras in Georgia" that, "As Georgia begins NATO exercises today, a coup was thwarted yesterday after secret cameras took photos of an attempted military coup."

Hundreds of Thousands of Civilians Flee from Clashes in NW Pakistan
Media outlets focus on the impending humanitarian crisis in Pakistan as an estimated half million people have fled clashes in the country's northwest between the Taliban and the Pakistani military. In "Civilians Are Fleeing from Swat," leftist nationalist Cumhuriyet notes "After warnings from the Pakistani administration that clashes could break out, thousands of civilians are filling the streets," to escape Swat. Mainstream Haberturk reports "500,000 people are fleeing from fighting within Pakistan." Liberal Radikal reports

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"The Taliban is advancing as half a million Pakistanis flee" from the fighting.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- PM Erdogan will deliver a speech at the Azerbaijani Parliament on May 13.
- The Interior Ministry forms a crisis desk to deal with the slaying in Mardin.
- DTP Leader Ahmet Turk held contacts in the European Parliament and met with EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn.

World

- Russia pulls out of a Russia-NATO council meeting planned for Brussels later this month.
- Armenia pulls out of NATO military exercises in Georgia.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) says 1,124 cases of the H1N1 flu infection have been officially confirmed in 21 countries worldwide.

JEFFREY